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Expanding Outreach in the AFRICOM AOR

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Article by Maggie Spivey

On January 9 – 11, the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS)—the designated U.S. Partnership for Peace Training and Education Center (USPTC)—hosted a visit by Mr. Mike Casciaro, Chief of the Security Cooperation Programs Division in the Strategy, Plans, and Programs Directorate (J5) at U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), located in Stuttgart, Germany.

As NPS expands its outreach and programs in the AFRICOM Area of Responsibility (AOR), the USPTC Program Office coordinated the visit, which included meetings with faculty and staff from across campus.

Mr. Casciaro has been with AFRICOM since its inception in 2007, and in his current role, he provides oversight, policy guidance, funding recommendations, and program implementation over the bulk of security cooperation funding that AFRICOM controls, executes, priorities, or influences.

Defense Resources Management Institute (DRMI) faculty completed their second mobile course in the Democratic Republic of Congo this past September, and Dr. Francois Melese, DRMI Executive Director, had the opportunity to brief Mr. Casciaro on other available DRMI offerings that could be beneficial for bolstering African nations' defense capabilities. In particular, Mr. Casciaro was interested in bringing the Defense Resources Management Course to Africa and also bringing back the Francophone West Africa Regional Course, which has not been held since 2005 due to host-country funding limitations.

Mr. Mark Dankel and Ms. Lyla Englehorn, both Research Associates with the National Security Institute's Maritime Defense and Security Research Program, provided Mr. Casciaro a brief on a 4-week international maritime security course that will be particularly beneficial as the AFRICOM air and maritime security branches assist Ghana, Liberia, and Cape Verde in building coastal defense capabilities.

Mr. Casciaro received a variety of other briefings, including one by Dr. Aruna Apte, Assistant Professor with the Graduate School of Business and Public Policy, who spoke about a Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Operations Resource Course. Dr. Ron Fricker, Associate Professor with the Graduate School of Operational and Information Sciences, and several of his students, who are conducting Trans-Sahel Survey Research and Modeling, presented on their progress. Capt. (Ret.) Tim Doorey, Col. (Ret.) Eugene Mensch, and Capt. (Ret.) Paul Shemella, all faculty from the Center for Civil-Military Relations, also provided information on some of their mobile courses, such as Africa Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration and Africa Security Forces and the Electoral Process.

As a former Army Foreign Area Officer with experience in the Middle East and Africa and as a graduate of NPS with a Master of Arts in National Security Affairs, a highlight of Mr. Casciaro's visit was lunch with a group of Foreign Area Officers from NPS and the Defense Language Institute who will soon be assigned to various countries throughout the AFRICOM AOR. He answered questions regarding threats and emerging challenges in the region and talked about the future structure and role of AFRICOM itself.



With the exchanges that occurred during the visit between the NPS faculty, staff, and Mr. Casciaro, it proved to be a valuable experience for all involved, and the NPS community looks forward to expanding its outreach and contributing to building defense capabilities in the AFRICOM AOR.



Photo credit: Javier Chagoya